



Social Media Guide

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Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
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Social Media Guide

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INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of this Guide

Although no magic formula for instant social media success exists, studies, best practices and examples of successful social media efforts do. This social media guide is an attempt to bring that information together in one easy to understand and easy to use document.

Beyond its recreational use to the everyday person, social media represents a cost-effective opportunity for businesses, celebrities, government agencies, non-profits and more to connect with their audiences and tell their story. At its most basic level, social media allows anyone to interact with other people and build relationships.

Once those connections are made and relationships are built, social media can help an organization educate the public about its products or services, provide customer support, relay important information, highlight success stories, ask for feedback and so much more.

However, as it is in life, not all interactions are positive, not all conversations are productive and good intentions do not always produce good results. This guide will provide tips, examples and best practices to effectively connect with your various stakeholders via social media.

CHAPTER 1

Social Media Basics

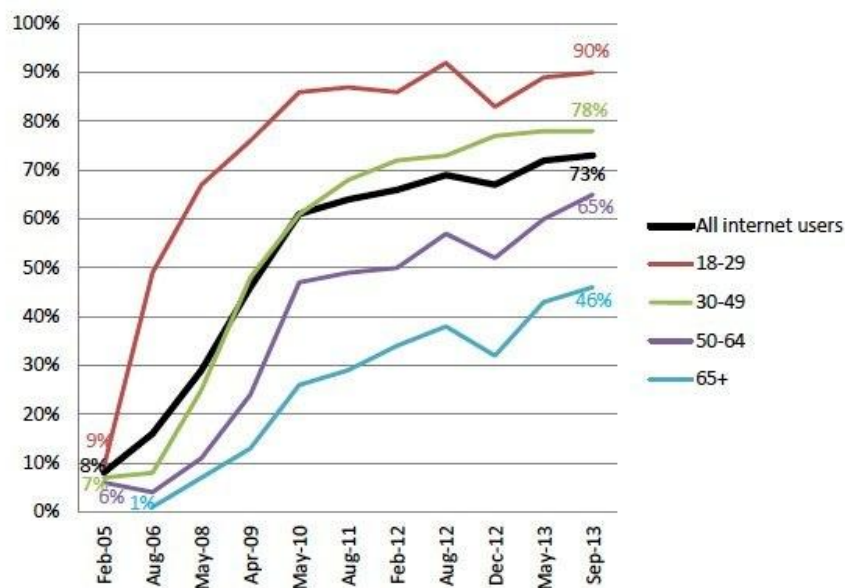
State of Social Media

- With 1.32 billion monthly active users, Facebook would be the world's 3rd largest country.
 - YouTube receives 1 billion visits every month.
 - 73 percent of online Americans have a profile on a social networking site.
 - 53 percent of users who Tweet at a brand expect a response within the hour.
 - More than 400 million tweets are sent on an average day.
 - More than 16 billion photos have been uploaded to Instagram.
 - More than 4.2 billion people access social media via mobile devices, which is more than the population of the world who owns a toothbrush.
 - Social media is the most popular online activity.
- *PewResearch Social Media Update

Forgive me for jumping right in, but these statistics attempt to prove the size and importance of social media in today's world. In sum, more and more people are adopting social media every day. And it's not just younger adults participating, 45 percent of internet users 65 or older are using Facebook, a 10 percent increase from 2012.

Social networking site use by age group, 2005-2013

% of internet users in each age group who use social networking sites, over time



Beyond the sheer number of people actively engaged with social media, it's important to remember that each social networking platform is used by slightly different demographics for different reasons. We'll dive into this in the next sections as we highlight some of the largest social media platforms.

Facebook



What is Facebook?

- Biggest social network in the world.
- For agency purposes, best platform to begin with.
- Visited more than 7 billion times a week.
- All about interacting and making personal connections.
- Highest levels of engagement from users compared to other platforms.

How is Facebook Useful?

- Connect and keep in touch with friends, brands, organizations, public figures and more on a daily basis.
- Share your experiences, successes, thoughts and goals with status updates, pictures and videos.
- Follow likeminded groups and organizations.

How to Start?

- Create a page for your group - it will be accessed via a personal profile.
- Use a great profile picture, have a bio, and add links to your other sites.
- Connect with people and groups already on Facebook.
- Create and share content such as photos, videos, relevant news stories.

- Although it varies by audience and message, studies show that the best time to post on Facebook is weekdays between 1-4 p.m. The worst time to post is on the weekends before 8 a.m. or after 8 p.m.

Twitter



What is Twitter?

- Micro blog and news feed.
- For department purposes, the second best platform to use.
- Concise information sharing.
- 140 character messages called “Tweets.”

How is Twitter useful?

- Learning, sharing and gathering information.
- Members followed show up on the home pages, similar to Facebook’s news feed.
- Works as a customized, real time new source on the topics, groups and people you’re interested in.
- 52 percent of users get news from Twitter.

How to Start?

- Create a profile with a relevant image and bio.
- Create a Twitter handle as simple and close to the name of you or your brand as possible.
- Find other people or groups that interest you.
- Create your own 140-character messages.
- Mention others with their @usernames to get the attention from profiles that interest you.
- Include hashtags in your tweets to categorize or group their topic (ex: #agriculture)

- People tend to use Twitter for news. In 2012, 83 percent of users reported seeing news on Twitter. The best time to post on Twitter is Monday-Thursday between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. The worst time is after 3 p.m. on a Friday.

Pinterest



What is Pinterest?

- Virtual collections of picture and information.
- 80 percent of users are women.

How is Pinterest Useful?

- Build collections of images (pin boards) based on interests, hobbies, wish lists, goals and events.
- Share and connect with other boards based on interest.
- Learn about new products, ideas, people.

How to Start?

- Create a profile (can use existing Twitter or Facebook accounts)
 - Follow groups, organizations and people you may be interested in.
 - Create boards based on categories relevant to your activities and interests.
 - Repin others images to your boards or upload images and information you like to build collections.
- Pinterest is primarily used via mobile devices and accounts for 48.2 percent of all social media sharing on iPads. Primary topics include food, drinks, family and parenting items.

YouTube



What is YouTube?

- Online TV where users create profiles and upload, watch, comment on and share video clips.
- Third most popular website in the world and second largest search engine behind Google.

How is YouTube useful?

- Entertainment, education, connecting, tutorials.

How to Start?

- Do not need a profile to watch videos.
- If you want to upload, comment, save, follow other channels and share videos, create a channel through a Gmail account.

Google+



What is Google+?

- Second most visited social media platform.
- Similar to Facebook and is its largest competitor.
- Receives more than 1 billion visits per month.

How is Google+ Useful?

- Connect and keep in touch with specific “circles” of friends, brands, organizations, public figures and more on a daily basis.
- Lets you put all your acquaintances in separate "circles" so you can share info, photos and messages with one group, or all.

How to Start?

- Create a profile with a Gmail account.
- Categorize people, groups or organizations by interests into “circles.”
- Similar to Facebook, create and share content like photos, videos, relevant news.

Instagram



What is Instagram?

- Allows users to take, edit and share photos and videos.
- More than 300 million monthly active users.
- Most popular among young and urban adults.

How is Instagram useful?

- Entertainment, education, connecting, tutorials.

How to Start?

- Create a profile with a relevant image and bio.
- Find and follow other people or groups that interest you.
- Create your own photos and videos and like other's as well.
- Mention others with their @usernames to get the attention from profiles that interest you.
- Include hashtags in your posts to categorize or group their topic. (ex: #agriculture)

- More than 90 percent of people who use Instagram are under the age of 35.

CHAPTER 2

Getting Started

After reading Chapter 1 and seeing some of the differences and advantages between the major social media platforms, it's time to put a plan together. It's important to put ideas and a strategy on paper before diving in and creating a social media profile. It will also help if you're not sure which platforms will work best for the goals of your division.

In this chapter we are going to ask questions, provide tips and best practices, and use examples to help build your social media “personality” and design a page or profile.

Building a “Personality”

JetBlue airlines is leading the way as one of the most helpful, friendly and downright entertaining brands on social media today. In a short time, JetBlue has amassed close to 2 million followers on Twitter and nearly 1 million “likes” on their Facebook page. It has done this by creating an engaging social media personality. However, it is not an accident or a result of one funny employee; they defined it and cemented it in social brand values.

JetBlue Brand Values:

NICE – SMART – FRESH – STYLISH – WITTY

Here's an excerpt from a recent news story highlighting JetBlues' often defusing personality during less than ideal travel situations:

Last November, traveler Brian Murray's flight was delayed. He tweeted to the airline. "Stuck in the airport waiting for @JetBlue flight. Who has a joke for me?"

An employee who was on duty, ran with it. "What washes up on tiny beaches?" she immediately asked. Murray didn't know. Under the cover of @Jetblue, Steadman tweeted back, "Microwaves ;)"



To help build your social media personality, let's start with a few questions:

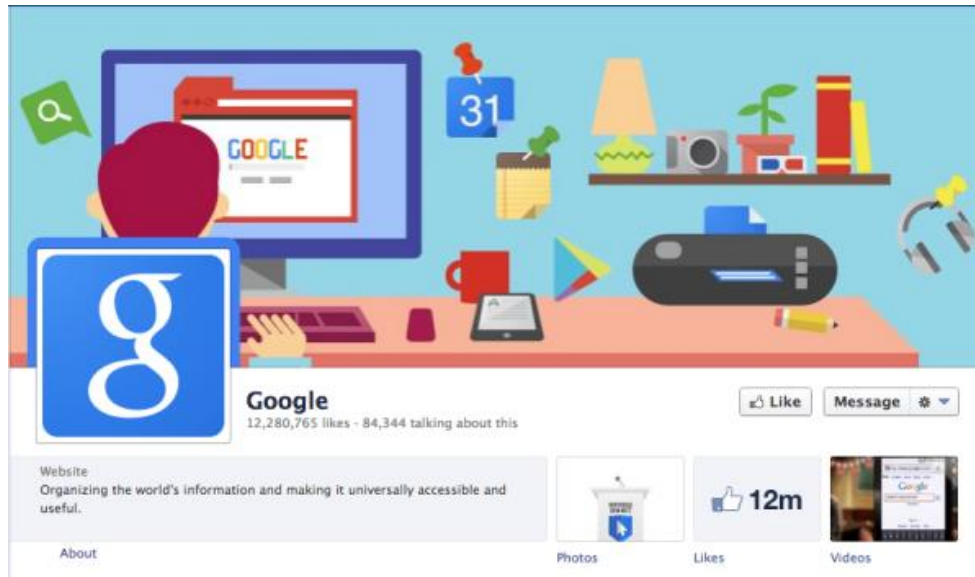
- Who are you going to connect with?
 - Is it the public, a regulated industry or professional associations?
- What are you going to say?
 - What story are you trying to tell? What messages are you trying to communicate?
- How are you going to say it?
 - Are you funny, sarcastic, intellectual, serious or formal?
- How are you going to be different?
 - Why will people follow you? What separates you from others in the industry?
- What are your goals?
 - It is to educate, build relationships, provide customer service or all of the above?

After answering these questions, create and write out your own brand values. Every social post, share, comment, picture, like, and story on your accounts should reflect these values.

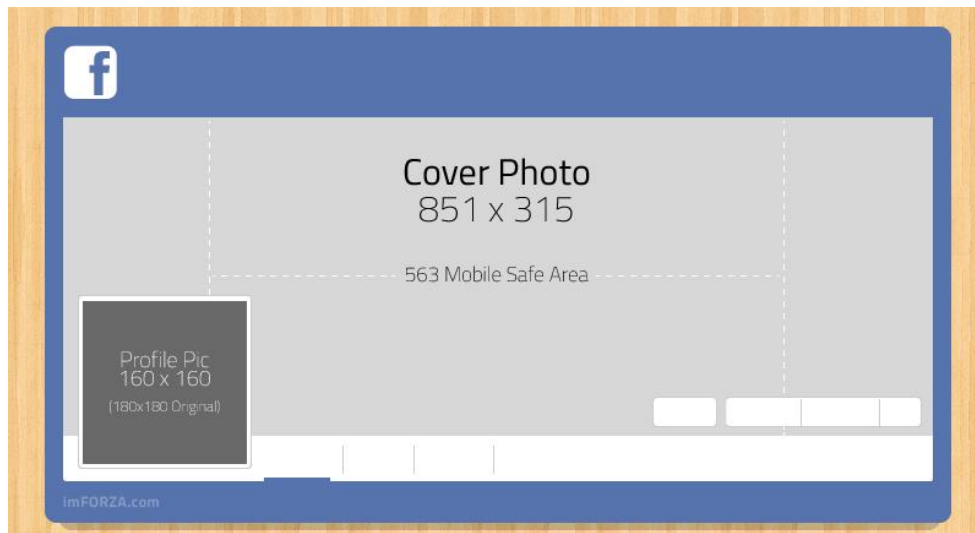
Page Design

After deciding who you are going to “be” on social media and outlining your audience, story, tone and more, it’s time to build and design your social media page or profile. What are the first things someone sees when he or she stumbles upon a social media page? It is undoubtedly the profile picture and, if applicable, the cover photo. Your profile picture and cover photos need to be eye catching, relevant, and consistent with the rest of your page design. The following are a few examples, with a few image cheat sheets included, for each social media network:

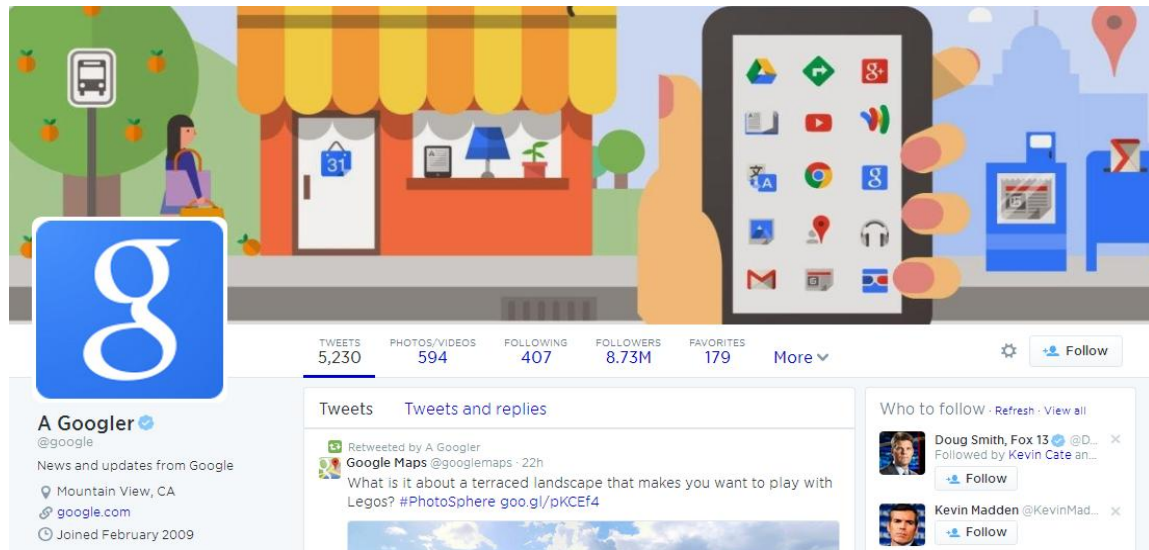
Facebook:



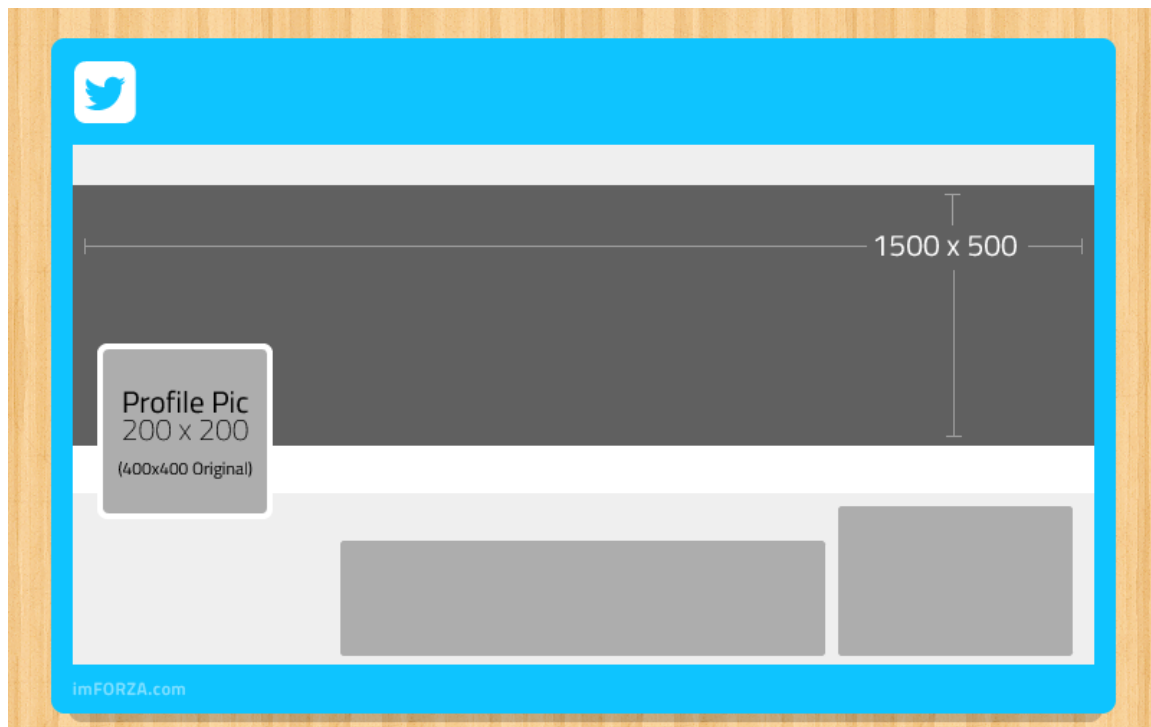
Google’s profile picture, bottom left, is their recognizable logo and the cover photo cleverly describes what they do. Include a link to your website or additional information and a short description in the header.



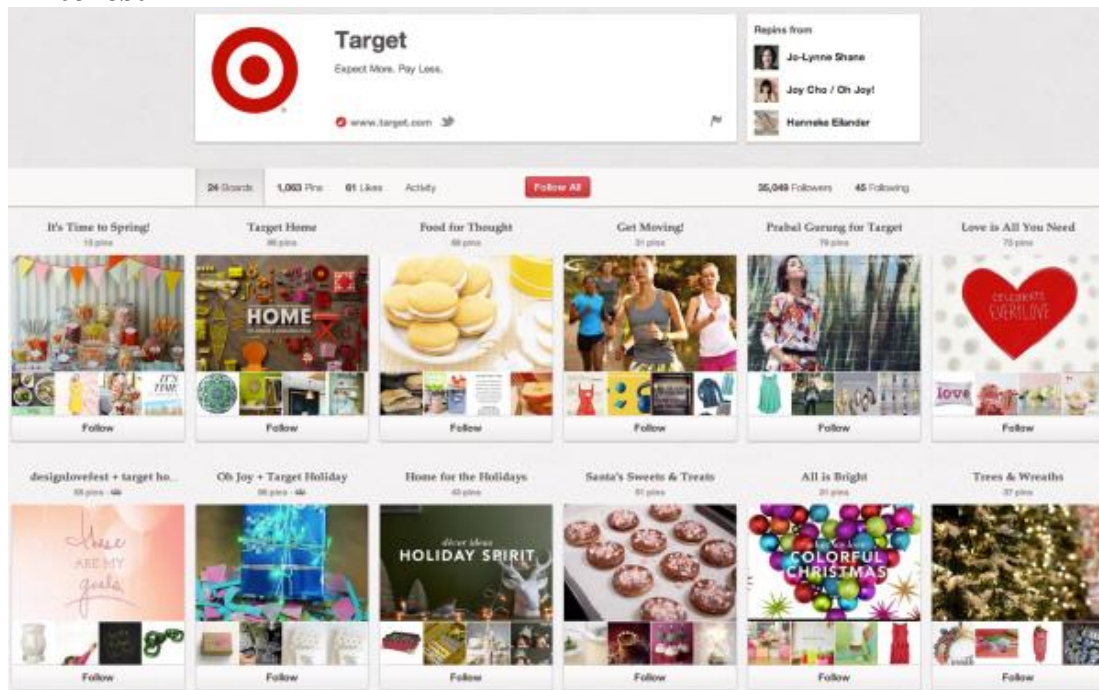
Twitter



Again, Google uses their logo and a cover photo that describes the many products and services they offer – all without using words. Be sure to include a link to your website or additional information and a short description in the header.

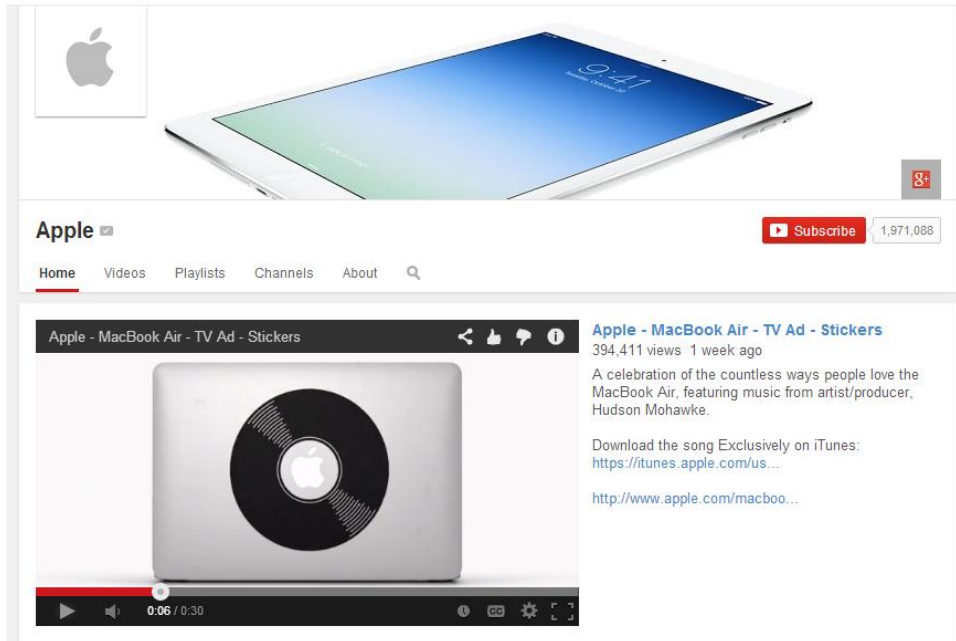


Pinterest

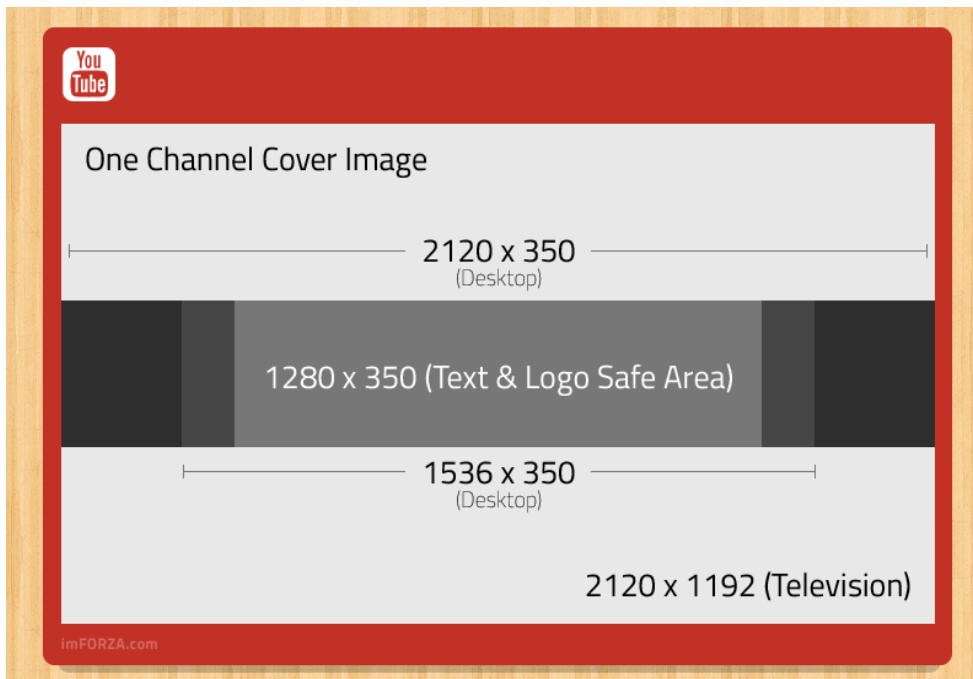


Pinterest has less customization on its profile page than Facebook, Twitter or Google+. However, because Pinterest is so driven by visuals, you can't afford to have a bland or unrepresentative photo. The profile image you choose as well as having catchy yet descriptive "board" titles are very important.

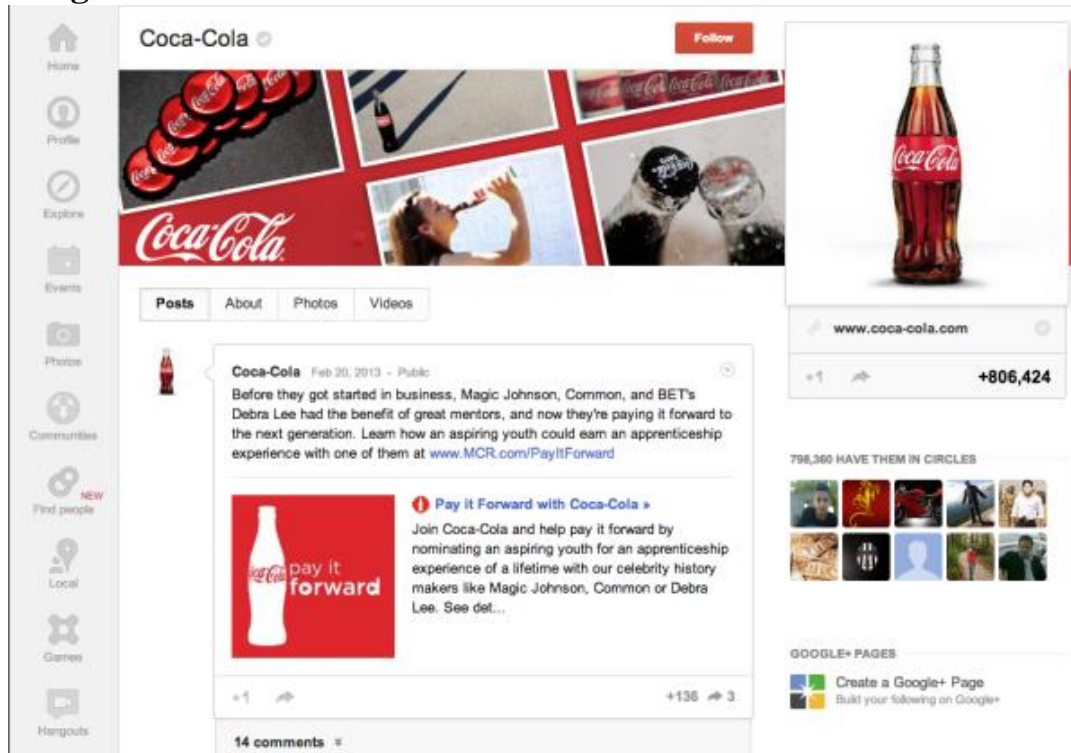
YouTube



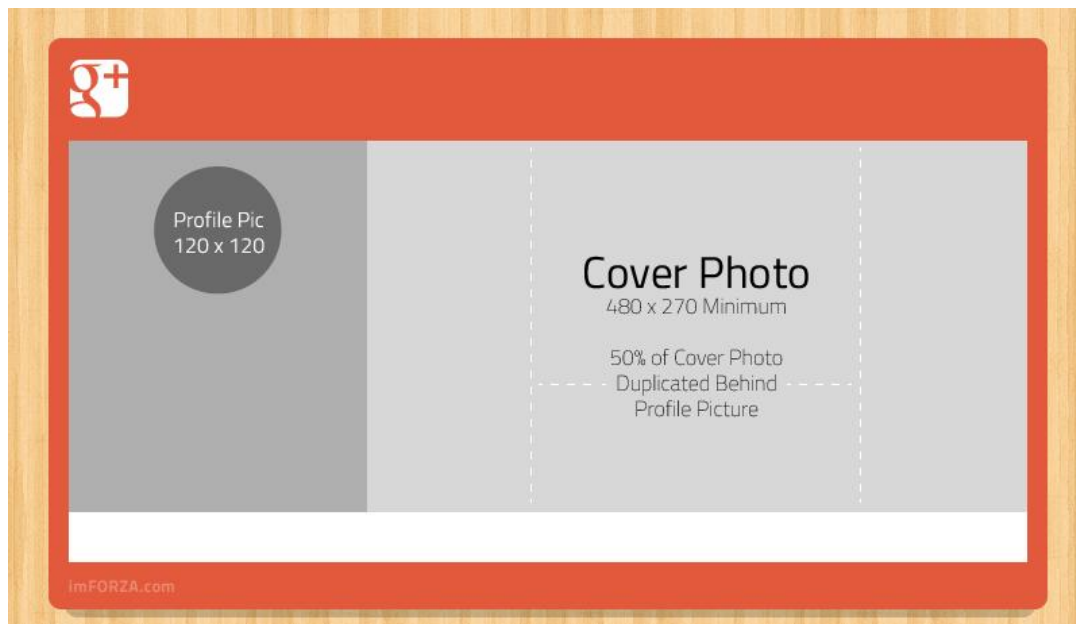
The only difference between YouTube's profile page and other social networks is its stringent size and quality requirements for the background cover photo. Once you get past that, make sure you fill the "about" section in with a website link and short description of your division or office.



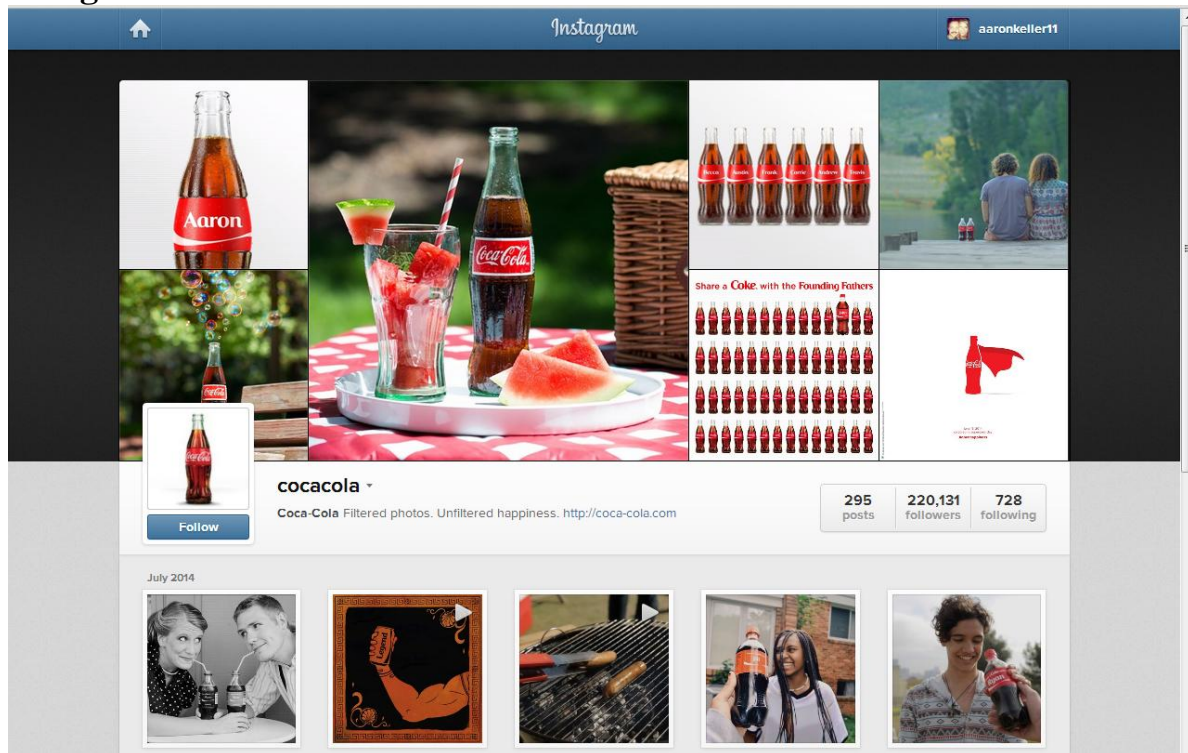
Google+



Similar to Facebook, include a link to your website or additional information and a short description in the header.



Instagram



Like Pinterest, Instagram has little to no customization on its profile page. Besides the profile picture, all of the photos you see in Coca-Cola's profile above are automatically chosen, and shuffled, from their uploaded photos. Don't forget to include link to your website or additional information.

CHAPTER 3

Creating Engaging Social Media Content

Your prolife images and design features may be the first thing people see when they visit your social media page, but engaging content is what will bring them back – and what will get your profile noticed in the first place. In today’s cluttered social media landscape, where complex algorithms decided what comes across your Facebook and Twitter feed, the “share” is king. And most likely, it should be the goal of every post.

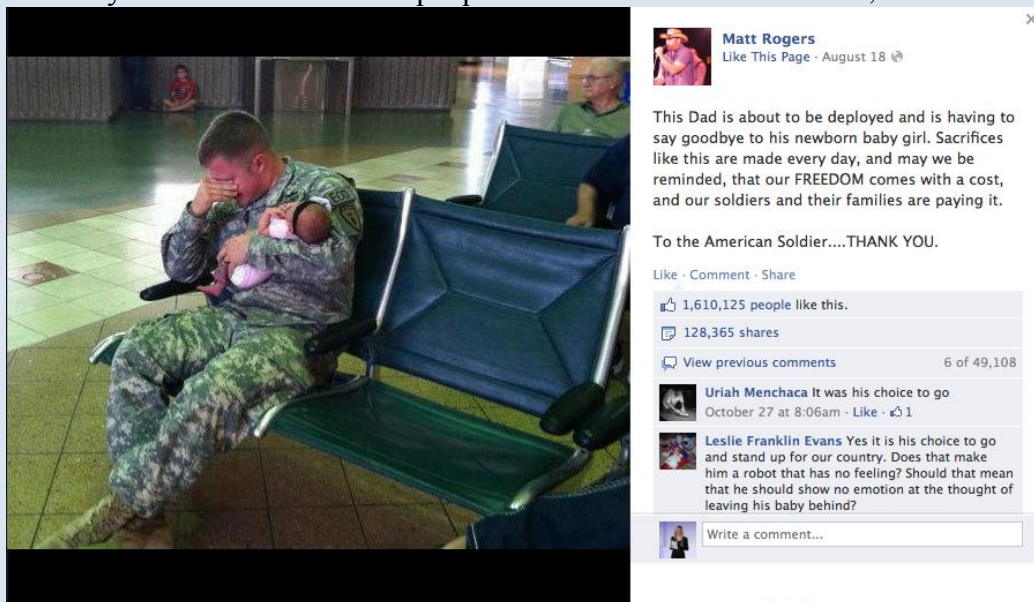
The fastest way to build an audience, generate awareness for your profile and spread your message far and wide is to post content that is shared by others to their friends and followers. It is basic social media word of mouth. With respect to Facebook, a “share” carries more weight than a “like” or a comment in the algorithm that determines how many people see your post.

It doesn’t matter if you’ve used social media for years or not, anyone can create content people will love to share. Keep the following tips in mind next time you’re trying to develop engaging social media content.

Appeal to Emotions:

Although some brands’ stories are inherently more emotional than others, try to appeal to your friends’ and followers’ emotions. Whether it is the impact of a policy decision, an annual event or raising funds for a charity, show the human impact. Appealing to emotions is the best way to compel people to act, and on social media that means a “share,” “like” or “comment.”

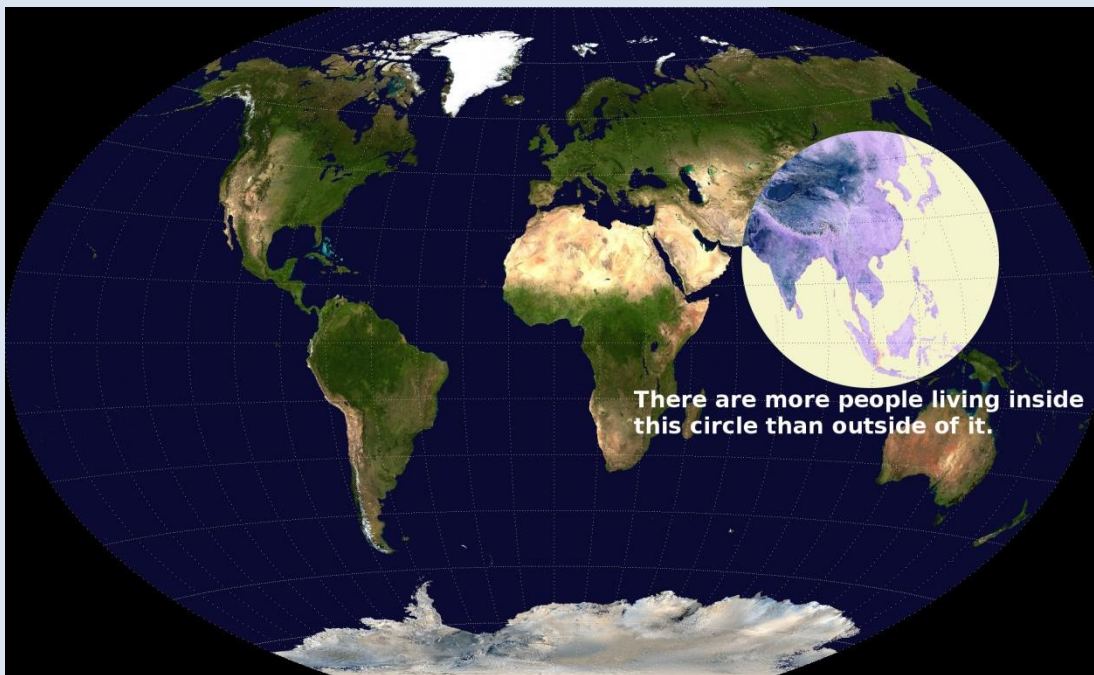
Matt Rogers, a county music entertainer, shared the following post from his page to around 12,000 fans. The post, which conveyed powerful paternal and patriotic emotions, was “liked” by more than 1.6 million people and “shared” more than 128,000.



Tell a Story:

While facts, data, maps and news updates are great for social media, make sure it fits into a broader, more exciting story.

The Washington Post published an article titled “40 Maps that Explain the World” and promoted it heavily on social media. The maps, all portraying different social, political and economic data, are interesting and visually compelling. They also fit into the broader story and idea, beyond the article they literally fit into, that Earth is fascinating, diverse, confusing and beautiful – all at the same time. Here is one of the 40 maps.



Use Images:

As they say, pictures are worth a thousand words and the same is true, if not more, for social media. Posting photos on social media is the best way to get your fans' attention - and their interaction. Images are easier and quicker to consume than text.

A recent study by Social Backers, a social-analytics firm, showed that photos were by far the most shared content on Facebook. If you remember, “shares” are the Holy Grail on social media.



Earlier this year, Ellen DeGeneres proved the power of a great photo on social media. She set the record for most favorites and re-tweets in Twitter history.



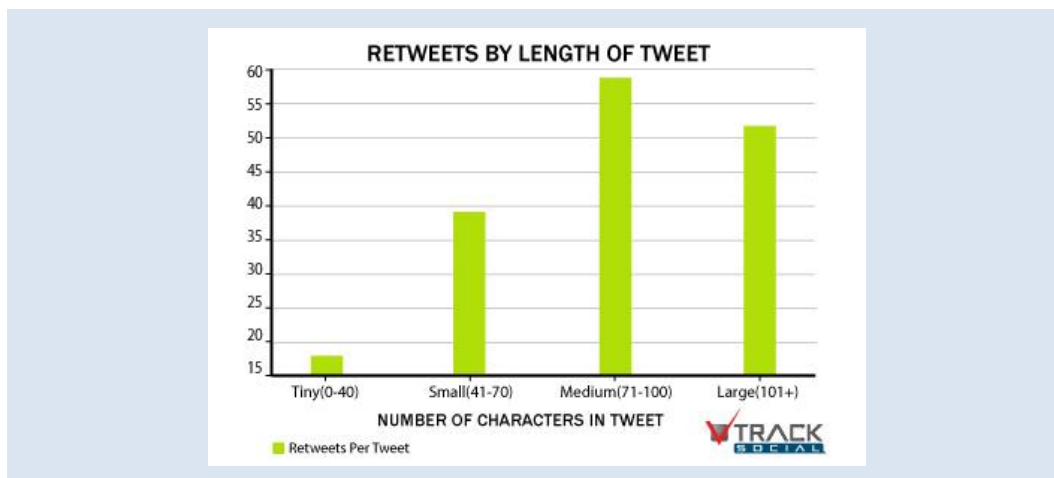
Keep it Short:

Twitter has a 140-character limit and Facebook allows up to 63,206 characters in a post, but that doesn't mean you should use them all. In general, the shorter the post, the better.

The following is from Twitter's best practices guide:

Creativity loves constraints and simplicity is at our core. Tweets are limited to 140 characters so they can be consumed easily anywhere, even via mobile text messages. There's no magical length for a Tweet, but a recent report by Buddy Media revealed that Tweets shorter than 100 characters get a 17% higher engagement rate.

According to Buddy Media, research has shown that the perfect length of a Twitter post is 100 characters. Brevity is difficult, and in fact, this sentence by itself is nearly 100 characters long.



According to Buddy Media's same analysis of Facebook, the ideal length is 40 characters. These posts received 86 percent higher enjoyment than longer posts; 80 characters or less saw a 66 percent boost.



CHAPTER 4

Measuring Social Media Efforts

You need to establish goals for your social media platforms before you can measure success. So, is your goal to have as many followers as possible, provide better customer service or raise awareness for your programs and services? These goals should also relate to and reflect your brand values.

After you've defined your goals, here are some metrics to consider:

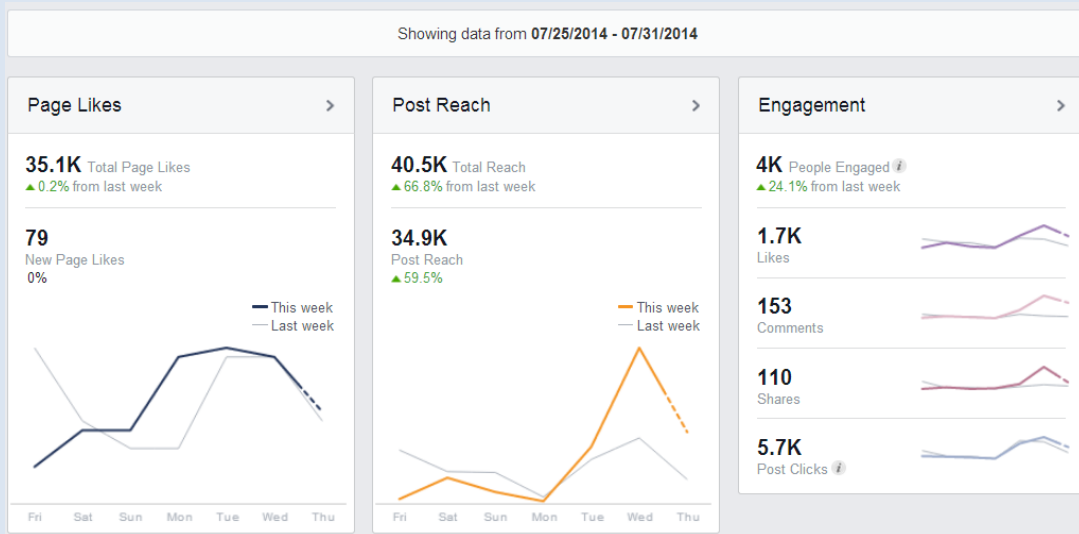
- **Followers:** How many new followers you get every day, week, month and quarter.
- **Engagement:** How many users comment, share, re-tweet, like or otherwise interact with your post.
- **Reach:** How many users saw your post.

Facebook and Twitter do a great job of putting profile and post analytics in the hands of profile administrators. If you've never used Facebook's or Twitter's analytic tools, it's best to explore what kind of data the platforms offer, and what they do not.

Here is Twitter's analytics dashboard. In this view, Twitter provides impressions data - the number of people who have seen the post - going back the last 28 days.



Here is Facebook’s “Insights” page. In this view, Facebook provides page likes, post reach and engagement for the last week. This information, and much more, can be pulled by week, month, quarter or year.



Now that you know the different social media platforms, how to build a personality and profile, how to create engaging content and how to measure your efforts, there is only one think left...

CHAPTER 5

Social Media Policies and Procedures

Although social media is an effective and important tool to communicate with the department's many stakeholders, it's critical that everyone is following the department's social media policies and procedures. By doing this we can better fulfill the department's mission and accomplish our goals.

For starters, the department's Communications office must approve every new social media profile. Divisions or offices looking to create a social media profile can request an application from the Communications Office.

If you have any questions, concerns, observations or tips related to social media, please don't hesitate to reach out to Aaron Keller at (850)617-7723 or aaron.keller@freshfromflorida.com.

Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services: Request for Social Media Use

Please complete the following questions in their entirety. Once all questions have been answered, please submit completed form to Aaron.Keller@FreshFromFlorida.com. The approval process typically takes two weeks to complete. No Division may post unless permission to use social media has been granted in writing by the Communications Office.

Division:

Contact Name:

Contact Phone:

What social media platforms are you interested in using?

What information do you plan to convey on these platforms?

How will social media enhance your Division's programs?

What social media handles (ex: @adamputnam) will you use?

Who will have access to this account and the ability to post?

What type of process will be instated for approving posts?

Division Contact

Date

Division Director

Date

Communications Office Signature
(Once permission has been granted)

Date